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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: OCTOBER GAERC - AFGHANISTAN AND U.S.-EU SUMMIT

PREPARATIONS FIGURE PROMINENTLY

REF: A. BRUSSELS 1480

1B. BRUSSELS 1476

BRUSSELS 00001481 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: USEU Pol M-C Christopher Davis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Summary: During the October 26-27 General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting in Luxembourg, EU Foreign Ministers (FMs) discussed a range of topics including Afghanistan, the Lisbon Treaty and upcoming summits, including the November 3 U.S.-EU Summit. The General Affairs Council focused primarily on the Baltic Sea Strategy, preparations for the October 29-30 European Council, and the Lisbon Treaty. Discussions during the External Affairs Council centered on the situation in Afghanistan-Pakistan, primarily how the EU should further engage the region, and adoption of an action plan which prioritizes the EU's plans and specifies how to implement them (Ref A). The Middle East, Iran, Sri Lanka and the Western Balkans were also discussed. The GAERC approved the EU-Syria agreement, but because of last-minute Syrian reluctance, there was no signing. EU Cooperation Council meetings were held with the three Caucasus countries along with an EU-Council of Europe Quad meeting on the fringes of the GAERC. End Summary.

General Affairs

12. (SBU) Chaired by Swedish European Affairs Minister Malmstrom, the General Affairs Council focused on the Baltic Sea Strategy, preparations for the October 29-30 European Council, and the Lisbon Treaty ratification process. Malmstrom deemed the establishment of an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region to be one of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency. The strategy, to be adopted by the European Council summit meeting on October 29-30 in Brussels, addresses environmental challenges, and contributes to economic, social and territorial cohesion and competitiveness. The strategy is also intended to serve as a model for other macro-regions.

13. (SBU) The General Affairs Council reviewed the items to be addressed by the October 29-30 European Council; namely, institutional issues, climate change, the economic situation, macro-regional strategies, and illegal immigration.

14. (SBU) With regard to the Lisbon Treaty ratification process, Malmstrom referred publicly to the October 27 Czech Constitutional Court hearing, noting that the Court would probably make a statement (Note: now not expected before November 3). She said the European Council would look at the state of play and what "can be done to materialize the last ratification" still missing. Taking questions, Malmstrom said that neither the EU-26 nor the Czech Republic were in a position to pronounce on draft language for a possible

solution to the Czech demands, and she was not sure the leaders would be able to do that on Thursday and Friday. (Note: They were. See Ref B.) As for the Slovak delegation in the October 26 Council, she said it concurred with others that "nobody wants a reopening of the ratification process" in all Member States. Malmstrom also said there had been "no discussion of (language concerning) the Benes decrees on the part of the Swedish Presidency."

¶ 15. (SBU) Malmstrom said the Swedish Presidency presented a report on the creation of the European External Action Service. As for the new positions to be created under the new treaty, Malmstrom said that the Swedish Presidency had "not started formal consultations" (pending clarification from Prague). UK Foreign Secretary Miliband was quoted as separately telling British reporters on the fringes of the GAERC that the EU could be marginalized in world affairs if it did not pick a figure of the Tony Blair-type for the job of permanent President of the European Council. Asked for the Presidency's opinion, Malmstrom would only say that the name and profile of the future President "go very much hand in hand." She reiterated her well-known views about the need to pick a woman for one of the top-level EU jobs. Concerning climate change, Malmstrom said the leaders would have to "send a strong signal to international negotiators" (i.e., at the Copenhagen conference), acknowledging the need for conclusions concerning financing to help developing countries meet climate goals. Commission Vice President Wallstrom congratulated the Presidency on its "solid preparatory work"

BRUSSELS 00001481 002.2 OF 003

for the European Council, emphasizing the need for the EU to have a new institutional framework to tackle climate change, the economic and financial crisis and immigration problems.

External Affairs

¶ 16. (SBU) Chaired by Swedish FM Bildt, the External Affairs Council focused primarily on the situation in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Iran, and the Western Balkans. Contrary to earlier indications, although the Council approved the EU-Syria Association Agreement, there was no signing. A senior Swedish official made clear that while the EU "would have been ready" to proceed with the signing in Luxembourg, the Syrians had not been prepared to do so. No date was set, but some sources have said the Swedes intend to complete signing during their presidency.

¶ 17. (SBU) On Afghanistan, the Council discussed the situation on the ground and the future of EU engagement in the region. The Council adopted conclusions and an action plan for strengthening the EU's engagement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The plan is intended to rationalize the EU's approach, prioritize policies and describe how to implement policies in the region. FM Bildt said that the meeting focused primarily on "the action plan for strengthening action in Afghanistan and Pakistan that we have launched." He referred to the EU Blue Book 2009 - The EU and Afghanistan (link sent to EUR/ERA separately) and reported that there was a "new recognition that while security is critical, we cannot succeed in Afghanistan if we fail to build a civilian capacity." He said that "a more determined effort is clearly needed on the civilian and political sides" of EU actions there. Bildt noted that he was going to Washington with HR Solana for the U.S.-EU Summit the next week and that "this (the EU action plan) will be a key topic at the summit." On Pakistan, Bildt said "it's a different situation, but we very much need to support the efforts of the Pakistani authorities to develop civilian capacity both in the short and long terms." (See Ref A for further details.)

¶ 18. (SBU) Asked if the EU's financial effort, now amounting to some one billion Euros per year for Afghanistan, would be increased in the future, Bildt replied "yes, I expect an increase" and went on to say "based on our policy document (action plan), we are asking Member States to come back on how to implement it. It is up to the Member States, but, yes, I would expect an increase. Again, there is a recognition of the centrality of civilian capacity building."nd recent U.S.uceed without the

Bosnians themselves." To a reporter asking how the EU can succeed in paving the way for the future in Bosnia and the Balkans if they can't succeed in dealing with the past (a reference to the Karadzic trial), Bildt replied "yes, we must focus on the future" and argued "we have numbers of examples in Europe where we have not agreed on the past," referring to differences between the Swedes and the Danes on their shared history. He said that the history of reconciliation after WWII is "extremely divisive and sensitive in several countries, but the EU is based on reconciliation for the future." Bildt expressed his belief that the work done by ICTY will "set the record straight and can help to assist reconciliation over time." Concerning Albania's EU membership application and its treatment by the Council, Bildt said that the delay in referring it to the European Commission for its opinion was "due to the fact that there is a new government in Germany, that new procedures need to be applied for consultations with the parliaments in certain countries, and that this was purely technical and not political."

BRUSSELS 00001481 003 OF 003

¶10. (C) We understand from well-placed Council Secretariat contacts that during the October 26 working dinner, Macedonia was discussed. According to our contacts, Greek Alternate FM Droutsas reportedly expressed "a willingness to work on the issue." Our contacts noted that this was a "major shift" in the Greek approach. Prior to the recent change in government, the Greeks had taken an increasingly hard line in their approach to any Macedonia-related topics in EU-level meetings.

¶11. (U) Asked for his expectation/reaction following the Iranian government's statement that they will respond to the P5 plus 1 proposal within 48 hours, High Representative (HR) Solana told the press he was not in a position to answer the question, adding, "I saw the same announcement you did; let's see how the situation evolves." Pressed to say whether there could be important changes to the P5 plus 1 proposal offered to Iran, Solana noted that the plan was signed by Mr. El Baradei and that all players ratified it except Iran. "Let's see what their answer is, but it is a good deal that we proposed to them."

¶12. (U) Turning to the Middle East, FM Bildt reported that ministers had a good discussion on the Middle East based on a report by HR Solana, who was there the previous week. Solana himself said, "We are in contact with our U.S. friends, and we hope very much that in a short period of time we will be in a position to re-launch the peace process." Solana later reiterated the EU's determination to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority and PM Fayad. He said that those issues "will be discussed next week in Washington as well" (during the U.S.-EU summit and ministerial meetings November 3-4).

¶13. (U) Concerning Sri Lanka, FM Bildt said that ministers had a "good discussion on Sri Lanka. They are concerned about the humanitarian situation there, the refugee situation, and they want to see whether they can make a contribution there."

To a reporter noting earlier attempts at such efforts and the negative response from local authorities, Bildt responded by saying that the EU "had an obligation to address the humanitarian situation." He noted that the European Commission has been "reviewing Sri Lanka's obligations regarding the humanitarian situation, that it was a negative review," and argued that cooperation was in the interest of the authorities of Sri Lanka, adding "they won the war, they must win the peace, and we stand ready to help them win the peace."

Troikas

¶14. (U) On October 26, EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan, and EU-Georgia Cooperation Councils took place. Also, on October 27, an EU-Council of Europe Quad meeting took place.

MURRAY

